AN
ARGUMENT
ON
THE NATURE OF
PARTY AND FACTION.

AN
ARGUMENT
ON
THE NATURE OF
PARTY AND FACTION.

In which is conſidered,

The DUTY of a GOOD and PEACEABLE CITIZEN

AT THE

PRESENT CRISIS.

by Capel Loffft

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of "the ſtate"
Is bound in ſhallows and in miſeries.
On ſuch a full ſea we are now afloat:
"Britain" muſt take the current when it ſerves,
Or loſe her ventures.

Vid. JULIUS CÆSAR, Act IV. Sc. III.

LONDON:
Printed for C. DILLY in the Poultry.
MDCCLXXX.

Bx 2017.8p. 2535

HARVARD COLLEGE
Mar. 12, 1937
LIBRARY

Rev. John S. Penman

IS IT NOT A CRIMINAL INDIFFERENCE TO BE OF NO PARTY IN THE PRESENT ALARMING AND DIVIDED STATE OF THE NATION?

AT a criſis, concerning which it is ſimply to affirm the truth, when we ſay that no words can do juſtice to its importance, the warm feelings of Engliſhmen out-run argument in the affirmative of the queſtion.

But there are ideas aſſociated to words; there is an influence in eſtabliſhed habits, in a new unexampled ſituation of affairs; there are intereſts and paſſions, that will be heard, or will ſilently, but powerfully, operate in affecting the deci-

ſion on this point. So far as good ſenſe and juſtice are on the ſide of theſe motives, one ſhould wiſh them to prevail: but while we have every thing to hope from right principles, we have no leſs to dread from prejudices and undue prepoſſeſſions, which are always hoſtile to truth, and ſure to exact a too dear purchaſe for any temporary benefit derived from them to ſociety: to theſe we are obnoxious as men; and it is the common intereſt and duty of humanity to guard againſt them; now eſpecially, when it is eaſier to apprehend the danger of erroneous or defective principles, than to eſtimate the probable extent of its effects in the preſent ſtate of the nation.

The name of PARTY is ſo hateful to ſome, when applied to any but their own party, ſo alarming to the timid, and ſo ſuſpicious to wiſe and moderate perſons,

ſons, that, notwithſtanding our principal attention is due rather to things than words, it will probably not be thought unſeaſonable to ſay a little of its genuine meaning, and the ſenſe which it appears to carry in the queſtion propoſed.

Party, in itſelf, then, is an indifferent word; though, from the abuſe which has been made of it, uſually taken in a bad meaning. And here it muſt, by the nature of the propoſition, be taken in the indifferent ſenſe, which originally belongs to it. For no queſtion would aſk whether it was criminal to be that which it ſtated to be criminal; or whether it was juſtifiable to omit that which it ſtated on the terms of it to be an indiſpenſable obligation. As to that part of it which aſſerts the nation to be in an alarming and divided ſtate, it will hardly be conteſted; and, indeed, is generally admitted as a common principle.

The queſtion therefore appears to be expreſſed in proper and fair terms, which do not prejudicate, but leave the reaſons on either ſide open to impartial diſcuſſion, on a true and acknowledged ſtate of facts.

Having ſaid thus much, I take the freedom of affirming, that ſuch a conduct as the queſtion expreſſes, is, at the loweſt that could be ſaid of it, a criminal indifference.

Some determinate line of political opinion and practice is the duty of every man at all times: and the greater the danger, the more incumbent the duty.

Some there are, however, who think it ſufficient to object, that politics are too deep for the bulk of the people: theſe, if they think proper, will accept an obſervation of the immortal Locke, who ſays, "*Politics are nothing elſe but common ſenſe applied to public affairs.*

Let

Let it not be ſuppoſed that men, in whatever claſs or ſituation, are to be preſumed deficient in this quality; eſpecially Engliſhmen, whoſe national characteriſtic it has ever been conſidered. Let us not ſuffer the reproach of living under a government where *our rights are vague and uncertain*, the very *legal definition* of *wretched ſlavery:* and vague and uncertain they *muſt* be, where the *conſtitutional principles*, from whence they reſult, are made *obſcure*, contrary to their nature; *hid* from the *body of the people*, or *neglected* by them, under the notion of *incapacity* in the people to diſcern them: a pretext of *fraud*, or an apology for *indolence*, that admits of no excuſe; or a flimſy veil for timid intereſted *ſervility*. Let us not go home and tell our fair countrywomen, (and there are ſtill as fair and as deſerving as any age or country ever had to boaſt) that we are ſo careleſs, ignorant, and

unmanly, as not to be fit to aſſociate with our own ſex; or to merit the regard, or be worthy or capable of undertaking the protection, of theirs.

But there are profeſſions, there are manual employments, which ought to engage men, and will neceſſarily, if purſued, fill up their time more profitably to themſelves, and more to the benefit of the community, than *politics*. I aſk not of them that they neglect theſe; it is a part of their political duty to fulfil them; but a man's *firſt profeſſion* is to be a *good man*, in which he is miſerably defective, if he be not a *good citizen*. And as he is not exempted by the avocations of his particular buſineſs from attending to the great clear points of his *religious* ſalvation, ſo is he bound to attend to the equally clear points, and, in the next degree, important, of the *political ſalvation* of himſelf and his *country*;

try; in which every thing juſtly dear in this world is deeply concerned; and which he muſt conſider, on the principles of *natural*, as well as of *revealed religion*, eſſentially to affect him in the great day of account. *Stateſmen* have no more claim to ſhut the general knowledge of *politics* from the people, than *prieſts* have of *religion*. Ignorance and ſlavery in the *people*, obſtinacy, iniquity, error, and ruin to a *government*, is the fruit which ſuch *monopolies* of the *conſcience* and *underſtandings* ever have produced, and for ever muſt. A *few general truths, evident in themſelves, familiarly and generally underſtood, and accordingly applied to practice, conſtitute the politics of a free people*; though of the labyrinth of *fraud*, of the complicated perplexity of *unnatural oppreſſive ſyſtems of government*, there is no end. It hinders no private profeſſion or em-

ployment to attend to theſe plain and neceſſary truths; on the contrary, it promotes them. Thoſe who will not attend to the *great rights* and *intereſts* of their *country*, give us much reaſon to apprehend they will either with the ſame *indifference* neglect their own, or elſe purſue a *partial temporary advantage*, in a manner injurious to *ſociety*, and ultimately to *themſelves*.

But ſtill, in the preſent *divided* ſtate of the nation, will it not be better to ſit quiet than to add to the diviſion? To take a *decided line*, and purſue it *temperately*, is not being *unquiet*. To follow duty and conſcience is as far from the guilt of making a diviſion, as light from darkneſs. Do we not obſerve, that *political neutrality* could heal no diviſions, but muſt leave cauſes to their operation that would yet more divide us? We cannot, ſurely, avoid diſtinguiſhing between *party* and a *faction*. FACTION, conſiſting

conſiſting of *narrow views*, ſelfiſh *intereſts*, and *corrupt meaſures*, whether of *oppoſition* or of *miniſtry*;—for every thing is a faction which is ſelfiſhly and corruptly oppoſed to the common good; —faction would infallibly divide and weaken; and, if continued, muſt ruin any nation. Nor is its guilt or its danger much diminiſhed by ſuch an evil proceeding from the intruſted ſervants of the people in the executive parts of government. But there is always a party to be formed for the general good; the party of truth, freedom, virtue. This is a party which it would be criminal, indeed, not to adopt. This is *ſtrength*, and will eventually be *union*, if any is to be had: for there never can be union or ſtrength but where there is *confidence* and *rectitude*. They who object to party, would alike have you of a party, the party of the miniſter; either *expreſsly*, or *virtually*, by an *affected neutrality*, which

which is often more to their purpoſe than *bad* arguments, (for what other can ſuch a cauſe furniſh) or a bold vote in the ſervice of corruption.

But it is no wonder that a name like that of party, indifferent, as already obſerved, in its own nature, and of which the merit is to be judged by intentions, meaſures, and effects, in a combined view, ſhould be drawn into reproach, and men terrified from an honeſt attention to the public intereſt by the falſe ſhame of being called *party-men*; when even names deciſively honourable are held forth to *ridicule* and *abhorrence*, as if the *becoming* and the *ſcandalous*, as if *virtue* and *vice* had changed their nature. Thus, *liberty* is a word which ought, in the opinion of certain learned and wiſe men, to be expunged from the political dictionary; and *licentiouſneſs* to be conſtrued not the intemperate abuſe of authority, not a wanton invaſion on the

the rights, the principles, the honeſt manners, the ſacred virtues, the juſt freedom of a community, but the aſſertion of *juſt* and *neceſſary rights*, the maintaining of that character which is eſſential to men and citizens. *Licenſe* is that called which ſhould be revered as *liberty*. Inſtead of the *friends* of *freedom*, the *friends* of the *conſtitution*, we hear of a *new ſpecies* of beings, called the *King's friends*, as if there was ſomething oppoſite between *friendſhip* to the *King* and *fidelity* to the *people*, who make the *kingdom*; or, as if it was honourable to *Majeſty* to have an *excluſive* party claſſed under that *appellation*. Formerly the *only*, and certainly the *true* friendſhip, which *ſubjects* were permitted to claim with their *Prince*, had the more decent and rational title of *loyalty*; and *loyalty* meant a ſincere public-ſpirited obedience to *juſt*, *free*, *conſtitutional laws*;

laws; not a *violation* of *any*; and leaſt of thoſe in which the being of the *conſtitution*, the *eſſence* of *liberty* and of *virtue* conſiſts, the laws againſt *bribery* and *undue influence*: not an infringement of thoſe SACRED MAXIMS, which never allow a *neceſſity* contrary to *duty*; which *affirm*, that *laws to bind all muſt have the aſſent of all*; the *free*, *incorrupt* aſſent; for *law* recognizes no other; ſhe diſdains to give to a *venal ſuffrage* the title appropriated to her own awful ſanctions. *Loyalty* againſt the People, who make the laws, is a direct *contradiction*; it is *inexcuſeable rebellion*; it is the *worſt treaſon* againſt the crown. None therefore, but the *friends* of the *people* can be *loyal*. Formerly *allegiance* was underſtood to be the *bond* of *mutual law*, of *conſtitutional* and *reciprocal obligation* between the *crown* and the *ſubject*: now, there will be

be found more than ſufficient of thoſe who, without the abſurdity of *paſſive obedience* in the name, would make it more than paſſive obedience in the thing; an obligation to *do* as well as to ſuffer, any thing, and every thing according to the will and pleaſure of a power limited and executive in name. Once "THE CONSTITUTION" meant the *form* and *ſyſtem* of government, in which the people was acknowledged to have the principal ſhare: an inviolable known ſyſtem of political rights and uſages, which *no law*, *no authority* of its delegated ſervants could contravene *; but to which *king*, *lords*, and *commons* had the true glory of being *ſubject*, and which was ſuperior, infinitely tranſcendent, to their united ſuffrage and power; which laſtly by the *People* alone could be changed. *Prerogative* accordingly, and the *rights* of *parliament* as well as prerogative, were

* Vid. the Earl of Abingdon's Dedication to the People.

were well underſtood to be limited and *conditional* rights veſted in *ſacred truſt*, *ſubordinate* and *ſubſervient* to the *conſtitution*, to the *common-weal*. Neither ought we to be diſconcerted, if called *republicans*, for purſuing the *common good*, in defiance of mean and ſelfiſh intereſt. There are no governments but thoſe *of conſent*, and thoſe *without conſent*: there needs no *Juſtinian* to tell us this; and yet, to a principle ſo abſolutely ſelf-evident, as to endanger ridicule on the perſon who thinks proper to ſtate it; the rectitude or iniquity of the ſeveral ſyſtems, called *government*, which exiſt in the *world*; the *right*, the *freedom*, the *happineſs* of mankind, is related. *That government, which is by the conſent of the people, and adminiſtered incorruptly, under the controul of the people, for the common welfare, is a commonwealth or republic*: whether its *firſt magiſtrate* be called

called a conſul, a judge, or a *king*; one, or more than one; *annual* or for *life*; *elective* or *hereditary*. That which *force* or *corruption* pervert to the *will* and *pleaſure* of thoſe who have power, is *deſpotiſm*, whether in one or many. Where there is no common-wealth, (a word which will be found in our old *ſtatutes* and *law books*, to denote this mixt government of ours) there is no *people*; there is only an herd of ſlaves; and it is an inſult to the royal honour to call the maſter of ſlaves by the name of *King*; to confound *tyranny* and *right*, anarchy and order. A *King*, in a limited government, ſuch as ours, is *conſtitutionally* the *firſt magiſtrate* of a *free people*; and from the People he derives that majeſty by which law is executed, juſtice preſerved, the Conſtitution maintained. But if by *republicans* thoſe are inſinuated who, *againſt* the *inclination* of

of the people, purſue ſuch meaſures as *tend* to *diſſolve* the *conſtitution*, thoſe are the *republicans* in this ſenſe, whatever they may deſign, who would make a *limited monarchy* odious, by corrupting its *principles*; and *deſtroy* the *kingly authority*, by overturning its *power*, and *perverting* its *influence*. There is no danger of the *popular* part of the *conſtitution*, left to its *free agency*, overthrowing the *other* parts; but the *throne* may be endangered by its own *weight*; or over-ſhadowed by an ambitious party of great men; who, though perhaps they may want means, or not be diſpoſed to change the *form* of the government, may change the *ſpirit* of it, equally to the *prejudice* of the *King*, as already of the *People*.

This, which has been ſaid of the *abuſe* of *terms*, it is hoped, is no *digreſſion:* it was *originally* premiſed, as what ſeemed materially

materially to have influenced the ſentiments of men on the ſubject of the queſtion: and ſo much as I have offered upon it I hope may tend to confirm the propriety, the *neceſſity*, of being of ſome party; and the general characteriſtics of that which we ought to chuſe. Of Rome it was ſaid, as the deciſive criterion of her fall, that *Pompey* had a party, *Cæſar* a party, but the *Republic* had *none*. We have at length better things to ſay of our country than to be obliged to own, that the miniſtry has a party, oppoſition a party, but the PEOPLE none.

However, we are now given to underſtand, (what we know and feel, without miniſterial information, or elſe, probably, we ſhould not have been indulged with the intelligence) that we are engaged in a war againſt a very formidable confederacy; and thence it is inferred,

that we ought not to attempt a reform, (laudable, indeed, it is allowed, and neceſſary, if we were in leſs danger) but direct our whole efforts, and ſubmit ourſelves in every thing to *ſtrengthen* the *hands* of *adminiſtration*.

An *adminiſtration*, ſo far as it is *wiſe* and *well diſpoſed*, will ſtrengthen *reform*, and reform will proportionably ſtrengthen ſuch an adminiſtration. But when we are exhorted to neglect reform, in order that we may give ourſelves up to ſtrengthen adminiſtration, ſtrangers would naturally enquire, if ſuch ſtrangers are to be found, *of what adminiſtration?* The people of this iſland would as naturally anſwer, (not ſpeaking from theory and ideas) We know the men by their works; we feel what adminiſtration. What ſucceſſes have they ſhewn us that merited the name of ſucceſs, to compenſate the addition of upwards of SIXTY-THREE MILLIONS

of

of money, expended in leſs than SIX YEARS war, over and above the peace-eſtabliſhment; and which muſt go accumulated, and ſtill accumulating without end, to the enormous debt of the nation? What to compenſate for the ſtill more intolerable expence of AN HUNDRED THOUSAND LIVES of the ſubjects of the Britiſh empire, natives of theſe iſlands, or of America, deſtroyed by miniſterial wantonneſs and perverſeneſs? What have they attempted with moderation; what executed with juſtice or vigour? except a few acts which neceſſity extorted from them: ſuch as the *relief of Ireland*, long and ſhamefully delayed, and at laſt forced from them by the general cry and ſpirited exertions of that people. Have they not taught Engliſhmen to be aſtoniſhed at ſlight advantages; at fortunate retreats from before the Americans, ſo madly deſpiſed; at *lucky eſcapes* and *protracted ruin?* Have they not made

us *familiar* with *defeat?* And have they not placed us in a ſituation in which *victory itſelf,* could it have been expected, (but we lay no charge of victories upon them) would only be a triumph of one part of this ſo lately united and glorious empire, over the other part, thus unnaturally diſmembered by them: or, ſince we diſclaim the idea of a triumph over our brethren, a triumph of the *miniſtry* over the *empire in all its parts.* Lately, indeed, they have cured this objection, of engaging us merely in a civil war, unparalleled in its extent and danger, by the ſmall inconvenience of adding *France* and *Spain* to the quarrel. For, with regard to *Oppoſition,* in which we will not implicitly confide, nor neglect ſecurity againſt their poſſible intentions, *Miniſtry* has had ſupplies without meaſure and without account. Armies of Britiſh veterans, almoſt without number, have been exhauſted, though ſwelled with the

the honourable aid of foreign mercenaries. They have had *artillery*, *ſtores*, *ſupplies*, in unexampled profuſion; *Generals* to their own wiſh, never in any other cauſe diſgraced. With all this they have been blockaded, driven from poſt to poſt, famiſhed, captivated; not by ſquadrons or regiments, but a veteran Engliſh army at once. They have had a conſtant majority to create war: and no impeachments of any member of the cabinet, of any dependent or partizan of miniſtry, to obſtruct their proſecution of it. Have they not ſhifted the inſtruments of their deſigns, and varied the avowed objects of them, with all the unſteadineſs of the wildeſt *popular* government, the inexorable temper of an *ariſtocracy*, and the pride of ſingle *deſpotiſm*; without the *energy* of the *one*, the *conſiſtency* of the *other*, or the *diſpatch* ſuppoſed, but falſely ſuppoſed, to

be peculiar to the *third?* Have *Oppoſition* made theſe inconſiſtencies of avowed deſign and of actual conduct? *Revenue, ſupremacy, commerce* by *compulſion!* all objects of indiſpenſable neceſſity in their turn; all militating the one againſt the other. Precipitation to ſeize, hurry to abandon. Ill-timed haſte and unſeaſonable delay. Inſult, outrage, proſcription, devaſtation of what was called our own, amidſt the act of deſtroying it: demands of unconditional ſubmiſſion; indefinite terms of unconciliating pacification; enemies made out of the beſt friends; driven into union; dragoon'd and *ſtatuted* into independence; the obſtinacy of adherents wearied out by neglect and deſertion: the *Engliſh conſtitution wreſted from thoſe who claimed it as their birthright, and triumphed in it as their glory*; this done, as a fit expedient to keep them parts of the

Britiſh

Britiſh empire: and the *French conſtitution forced* upon thoſe who thought themſelves happy in our conqueſt, as it freed them of that yoke. Has oppoſition made the *French* and *Spaniſh confederacy*, by forewarning adminiſtration againſt perſiſting in thoſe meaſures, without an inflexible perſeverance in which that alliance of France and Spain with America could not have exiſted? Has oppoſition been even able to prevent the uſe of ſavage allies; the uſe of tomahawks and ſcalping-knives, againſt our American brethren, as arms which God and Nature —— We are Engliſhmen, and cannot utter the reſt. Has not that adminiſtration had the winds and weather on its ſide? as if Providence were determined to convince us that we owe our calamities and diſgrace, numberleſs and unequalled as they are, to the natural, the neceſſary reſult of the con-

duct of that miniſtry, which has been permitted to violate the rights of the *Conſtitution*, of *Nations*, and of *Nature*. Are we to thank adminiſtration that France and Spain did not attack ſome months earlier our navy, deficient in number, ſinking into rottenneſs, and unmanned? Has not the preparation been in vain urged by thoſe who are ſhameleſsly charged with betraying us to our enemies? Was it not at laſt, whatever it is, the late reſult of dangers provoked, and calamity ſurrounding us, not the precaution of policy? We are told by ſome of this very adminiſtration, that the hoſtilities with France, and the Spaniſh war, were long, long before expected; though ridiculed when minority pointed the effect in its neceſſary cauſes. The ſame adminiſtration has not told us what would have been the conſequence had the expected war fallen upon us earlier.

lier. It was hazarding too much. There is ſhame in the thought, and horror in the imagination. They have not told us to what vigilance of theirs, to what methods of defence we are indebted, that the combined fleets laſt ſummer did not burn Plymouth, and make more than a Gibraltar in the Britiſh channel, in Portſmouth itſelf. They can tell us that an entire Engliſh fleet retreated before the enemy in the channel, without exchanging a ſhot; they can tell us of the trial the year before of that brave Admiral and good Citizen, who obtained a truly conſiderable advantage over the French fleet, ſuperior in the number of ſhips and men. We complain not that he was tried. We would have every public character as much amenable to trial as any individual. But we could not be deaf to what paſſed before his trial. We ſaw and heard what paſſed during the trial and after it. We felt it. We

rejoiced

rejoiced in his glorious acquittal, as of more advantage and honour than a victory; but we know not whether to ſay he was traduced by a faction; this we know, he has been calumniated: the honour of the reſpectable witneſſes on his trial; the juſtice of the court, unanimous in their honourable ſentence of entire approbation of his conduct, the ſenſe of the nation, all has been inſulted in a manner, for which we have no expreſſions. We know in the general what men, what meaſures, are in honour and confidence with the miniſtry. We know of the miniſtry, that *meaſures* thus unjuſtifiable, thus pernicious, they have ſupported by *means* ſtill more, if poſſible, to be contemplated with horror. Have they not continued, encouraged, practiſed, as an ordinary, meritorious expedient, and carried to its fatal maturity, that which it is now faſhionable to call *neceſſary influence*, a mild

and

and inſinuating name for practices, which, if the decency of language permitted to be expreſſed by their proper epithets, the narrowneſs of words would be inadequate to the enormity of the fact. It is better that a vaſt empire ſhould be ſplit into a thouſand parts, than that one thouſandth part ſhould be governed by corruption: it is better that thouſands ſhould periſh by violence, than that fraud ſhould ſubſtitute ſlavery in the place of freedom. If the *diſmemberment* of *empire*, extinction of *commerce* in its moſt capital branches, neglect and deprivation of the national *defence*, the moſt powerful *Confederacy* provoked, the public reſources exhauſted in the purchaſe of infamy and ruin, the *Conſtitution*, as to its *ſpirit*, deſtroyed, and our public manners openly and ſyſtematically corrupted; if theſe are the *ordinary* misfortunes of government, *political ſociety is the curſe of mankind*.—Theſe are the ſentiments

which

which I truſt it is not unjuſt to aſcribe to my countrymen, taking the adminiſtration and its partizans, though not univerſally, on the plain evidence of facts: taking *Liberty* with its worſt accidental diſadvantages and *Slavery* at the beſt. What ſhall we ſay then, if there are innumerable reaſons why the party of adminiſtration, ſuch as it has hitherto been, cannot have our *active aſſent* without the utmoſt injury to the public; nor our implied aſſent by a neutral conduct, without the moſt criminal indifference? What ſhall we ſay, if, in the *eternal order* of things, the ſame meaſures which keep a ſtate incorrupt, preſerve *empire* intire and undivided; the ſame which inſlave, deſtroy; and the means which pervert the manners, to make them an engine of policy, prove the policy as *bad* as the ſupport and inſtruments of it are baſe and weak; diſſolve the confidence of individuals and ſtates, and ſubſtitute infamy with ruin,

ruin, for ſecurity and glory? What ſhall we ſay, when the beſt principles are warped into ſubſerviency to the worſt ends; private gratitude made a temptation of treachery to the public; filial and parental affection, and whatever is dear, ſacred, and tender in the ties of particular relation; whatever, by making the good and happy man in a domeſtic view, ſhould naturally make the good and the uſeful citizen, is turned into a ſnare; by which a man firſt becomes guilty of defection from the public, through a regard for thoſe whom nature has moſt endeared to him, and is then next the abandoned profligate in a private character, to the injury and unhappineſs of thoſe very relations; or the miſerable victim of an honeſt and accuſing conſcience; or the infatuated ſlave of a depraved zeal turned to the purpoſes of corruption and oppreſſion? What ſhall we ſay, when the *religion of purity*

purity and freedom is tortured into a tool of thoſe moſt fatal of miſchiefs? Hence it is no wonder that we feel the truth of that part of the propoſition, which aſſerts the nation to be now in *a divided ſtate:* but we cannot think of uniting it on principles of *immorality* and *error*, which are the *principles* of *diviſion.* We cannot think of defending it by the means of weakneſs and ruin. And hence it appears, that what has been ſaid relative to the conduct of miniſtry is not *invective*, but argument; ſince we cannot ſo well judge of the criminality about which the queſtion enquires, nor how far a neutral indifference is excuſeable, or otherwiſe, without conſidering the preſent ſituation of our government, the principles and the effects of the public adminiſtration. And if this view has been preſented to us for years, would it had the leſs truth! would that the repreſentation might be

be refuted, or that the conduct would remedy itſelf.

Some, who have too good an opinion of the ſenſe of the people, of Engliſhmen, to think they can be miſled by the *abuſe of words*, or be taught to think their rights, their freedom, a myſtery with which they are forbidden to meddle, and bound to entruſt them with the experienced wiſdom of government; and who think us not ſo far ſhort of Roman virtue and wiſdom, as to have no better means of defence againſt foreign dangers than by bowing to the increaſe of domeſtic grievances, would influence your feelings in behalf of your country, by ſuggeſting the apprehenſion of a *civil war*, an evil next to ſervitude, moſt to be deprecated. But whence is this to proceed? Not from the conſtitutional purſuit of meaſures evidently juſt and neceſſary; not from men who, propoſing the clear general good, have as little occaſion for

for violence as for fraud. But what ſhould we think of men who ſhould ſleep without ſhutting their doors, and uſing the juſt means of neceſſary ſelf-preſervation, becauſe honeſt men might join in approbation and concurrence, without being alarmed or offended; and none but rogues could be offended or alarmed reaſonably; and becauſe ſuch, who otherwiſe might have been content to ſtrip and beggar them, without cutting their throats, would then be obliged to hazard breaking in, or ceaſe from their plunder. Would this neglect be conſtrued a love of peace and good neighbourhood, or at leaſt a rational method of preſerving it? Would it not rather be provoking of wrong; which, begun thus, would end in violence, and compel honeſt men, who otherwiſe, by a timely care, might have enjoyed their own in peace and ſecurity, to oppoſe brutal force by manly reſolution. Is it any compliment to miniſtry

to

to tell us that we create war if we peaceably conſider and repreſent our national grievances to the national aſſembly, in the conſtitutional manner which right demands, and poſitive law vindicates. Such an idea can depend only upon a temper on one ſide, that would leave no colour of excuſe for indifference or delay on the ſide of the nation. Which Nation, if it now enter ſeaſonably, and in general concert, into the aſſertion of its juſt, neceſſary, and manifeſt rights, with Engliſh wiſdom, firmneſs, and moderation, a civil war cannot poſſibly happen. For, in general, this has been the conſequence, in whatever age or country it has befallen, of that very indifference which kept the bulk of the public from doing themſelves right till it was too late: and thus a number, comparatively ſmall, though, perhaps, conſiſting of thouſands of the beſt and braveſt among them, were ſacrificed, and too frequently

in vain, when all might have been ſafe by timely and united exertion; without even the doers of the wrong ſuffering any other puniſhment than the neceſſity of preſerving themſelves, as well as the people, by a peaceful reformation.

Permit me to repeat, that the *foreign dangers* of this country, however unfavourable to the purpoſes of ſelfiſh faction, ſhould not be an *hindrance*, but an *incitement* to *national reformation*. And as they do in reaſon, I truſt they will in fact, immediately, generally, effectually, inforce it. We are not contending, as it has been ſaid in the gaiety of metaphorical alluſion, about the ornaments and decorations of the veſſel. Corruption, deſpicable, inſidious corruption, has done what all the ſharks of power would have attempted in vain. It has gnawed into the Conſtitution. The brave veſſel of the ſtate is leaky; and if virtue, vigilance, and perſeverance, do not

not inſtantly interpoſe; if every friend to its ſafety does not join in its aſſiſtance, we have this remaining, to talk much and loudly of fighting, and when we ought to fight, to *ſink* before the inſulting enemy. On the other hand, let us be *calm*, *ſteady*, *unanimous*, and there does not in the force of the united world exiſt a power which we may not, with an humble aſſured reliance in the ſupreme protection, *confidently* oppoſe in defence of our liberties. We may find occaſion, from the dangers which now menace us, materially inſtrumental to this neceſſary, this invaluable end of reforming our conſtitution, and reſtoring our public manners. Strange, and peculiarly unhappy it muſt be, if foreign evils ſhould aggravate and perpetuate thoſe worſe domeſtic calamities, which are the *ſource* of our other ſufferings. In the time of a Scotch Rebellion, in the heart of the country, government could venture to

uſurp upon the *ſacred rights of the People*, by the arbitrary introduction of *ſeptennial parliaments*. The expedient, temporary in pretence at leaſt, of a ſuppoſed neceſſity, has ripened into an eſtabliſhed, confirmed violation. And is there worſe policy or inferior right in the people to fortify their defence againſt external attacks, not by walls and bulwarks, and other periſhable aids, but by the divine ſtrength of a renovated free conſtitution? Thus did Rome; and made foreign war, during the virtuous period of her republic, the occaſion of aſſerting her legiſlative rights, whether immediate or delegated; her aſſemblies, her repreſentatives, the perſonal, the political freedom of her people. She conquered abroad; but ſhe diſdained a conqueſt till ſhe had reformed firſt at home. Thus, in our own conſtitution, the ſtatute *de Tallagio non concedendo*, whereby every

every ſubject is declared free from all taxes and impoſts, but ſuch as he grants by his repreſentatives in parliament, was demanded and obtained, (our ſecond and better Magna Charta) before the nation would grant ſupplies for a French war, though eagerly deſired by the king, and flattering to the martial ſpirit of the country: and in general, in this country, diſtreſs and danger have not been able to render us remiſs; they have excited the ſpirit of our country to reform, to fortify, to perfect our conſtitution. It has been ſaid, that the power of the *executive* magiſtrate, of adminiſtration in general, ſhould increaſe in *war*; and the tendency in fact is ſuch, that many limited ſtates have degenerated into abſolute, by reſigning *ſelf-dominion*, through the luſt of conqueſt. Rome, whoſe principles of freedom and incorruptneſs are ſo often treated as the tale of a ſchool-boy, Rome has had the venerable hiſ-

tory of her beſt days ranſacked for ſeeming precedents of ſuch unwiſe ſubmiſſion. This has been already noticed, and in ſo far as at that time was mentioned, anſwer was given to it. The dictatorial power is frequently urged. A popular magiſtrate created by popular election; the authority of the tribunes not ſuſpended by his, although the conſular, and much of the ſenatorial power was. The appeal to the people in two memorable inſtances, and one of them affecting that military diſcipline which Rome ſo revered, prevailed againſt that authority; and the majeſty of that exalted power bowed before the ſuperior majeſty of the people, and to that ſource of its own tranſcendent *elevation* ſubmitted a *ſupremacy* uncontroulable by any other human authority *. It is the power of a NATION, not of a *party*, not of an individual, that ought to be ſtrengthened againſt a war: and when our Freedom has ſhewn itſelf in the

* Livius, L. VIII.—XXII.

the greateſt and moſt ſucceſsful exertions, *then* has it been that the thrones of Europe have trembled, and the world has revered the national majeſty of England. This fills our fleets with *voluntary, unimpreſſed ſeamen:* this invigorates armies, not fighting for pay, plunder, or by the impulſe of blind obedience, but for their property, their families; as men and as citizens; for their own and their country's liberty and honour. Many reigns might I relate, in which the power of the crown was vaſt indeed. In the reign of Henry the Third it triumphed repeatedly over the vigorous efforts of riſing freedom. In the reign of Henry the Eighth there was no want of a ſole executive authority; the executive had almoſt annihilated the appearance of a diſtinct legiſlative: in the reign of James the Second the monarch was *abſolute* even to *impotence*; his power over individuals was lawleſs and enor-

mous; *againſt* the *Nation* it was nothing; in *behalf* of the *Nation* it was *nothing*. Where then were our triumphs? where our national ſuperiority in conteſts with foreign ſtates during thoſe reigns?—Freedom, integrity, public union; theſe are the ſtrength of nations in war and peace: they make war unneceſſary, and peace glorioufly ſecure. The exertion of any partial power is the cauſe of oppreſſive war, of precarious, diſhonourable, unprofitable peace. On the whole therefore, we have every thing to hope againſt the French and Spaniſh Confederacy, from a national reformation: but if we, at the time when France is riſing in civil and religious liberty, and in national œconomy; if we, while Spain * has been tempering for ſome time paſt the rigour of her colonial governments, and ſeems to have caught a glimpſe of

* Vide Robertſon's Hiſtory of North America.

the

the principles of Commerce, of the benefits of provincial Freedom; if we be ſunk in the ſcale in all theſe inſtances, and neglect retrieving what ſtill may be retrieved, what muſt be the event?

We have now objects propoſed of pure unequivocal good; in the choice of which you have no rule of *party*, in a *factious*, improper ſenſe, to determine you, as if you were to enliſt under the ſtandard of a particular ſet of men, always fallible, and who may be improperly intereſted, whether in miniſtry or in oppoſition. You have the liberal party of integrity and honeſt independence to chuſe, oppoſed to ſervility and corruption. And although the circle of this metropolis has been facetiouſly made the limit of political information, for which we, who have the honour of reſiding in it, are doubtleſs obliged; and the country gentlemen are kindly ſuppoſed to be exempt from having any concern in politics,

tics, one is glad to find, what it was natural to expect, that the country gentlemen, very far diſtant, have the ſpirit and ſenſe to think and act conſiſtently in the great concerns of their country. And are we not happy, that in many and conſiderable counties, beginning with one of the greateſt and moſt populous, ſome important *ſpecific objects* of reformation have been propoſed already; have met with the ſenſe of the numerous and reſpectable aſſemblies conſtitutionally convened; and have been expreſſed in ſuitable petitions to the great national aſſembly? The reduction of exorbitant ſalaries, penſions, and ſinecure places, and *the reſtraining of* UNDUE INFLUENCE, is included in all of theſe which have already proceeded from a majority of the Engliſh Counties. Already meaſures are bringing forward to ſecure the independence of Elections.

And

And in this *reſtraining of undue influence*, the great, the *neceſſary* object of all the petitions, it remains to have the only adequate ſecurity in view, ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS and EQUAL REPRESENTATION. Such objects will be of benefit and ſecurity to every miniſtry and every party, ſo far as they act juſtly. Other things are neceſſary; and whatever is truly ſo will and muſt be the reſult of theſe once eſtabliſhed: but without theſe I dare not affirm, and am very far from believing, that any thing can be ſufficient or permanently uſeful.

The retrenchment of the excreſcences of corruption, unmerited penſions, and ſuperfluous places, may afford a temporary relief, and a ſpecious ſemblance of reformation; but by ſecret, oblique methods, what the dependents of adminiſtration may make a merit of being obliged to reſign in one way they will find means

means of being reimburſed, probably with intereſt, in another.

We have *hints* and *inſinuations* in order to keep thoſe neutral, whoſe honeſty and ſenſe cannot be engaged on the ſide of undue influence. Every thing is allowed to be *good and right* in the declared object of the county-meetings; and thence a concluſion is inferred, by a logic properly miniſterial, that there muſt be ſomething bad at the bottom. We are told, and I truſt with truth, that ſuch a national movement will not ſtop with retrenching a few obnoxious penſions and places. I truſt it is true. I hope its aim is levelled at the *root of corruption*.

But from theſe great meetings ſomething ill may happen. Riots, tumults, we know not what. So when the electors of England, the men of England at large, were robbed by the ſtatute of the eighth of Henry the Sixth, of their eſſential rights, the Preamble talks of Elections

tions for knights to ſerve in parliament, made by great, outrageous, and exceſſive numbers of people, whereby (nothing ill is ſtated to have happened but) manſlaughters, riots, batteries, and diviſions ſhould very likely ariſe and be: and for convenient and due remedy of this chimera, this great number in the ſeveral counties were ſtript of the firſt privilege of civil ſociety: and bore it tamely: ſo much to their wrong were they called outrageous.

We can ſee at the firſt glance on our *Repreſentation* what it is, whether conſidering the electors or elected. The electors of 254 repreſentatives, (a majority of the number which has been aſſembled on the greateſt queſtions, of the number which conſtitutes an houſe full almoſt to a prodigy) this majority is choſen by leſs than *ſix thouſand* perſons: great part of them dependents on the worſt kind of influence; petty miſerable boroughs in purchaſed ſervitude to the ſlaves, it may be,

be, of ſlaves. The * claims of ſome of theſe boroughs, founded on populouſneſs at the time, tho' now the veſtige of their very ruins is evaneſcent; of others, on the caprice or worſe motives of kings; of many, where the writ was general, on the arbitrary pleaſure of the ſheriff, ripened by time into a confirmed abuſe; but not into law, unleſs we recognize, contrary to reaſon and law itſelf, preſcriptions againſt the public liberty and cuſtoms; againſt the conſtitution; againſt policy and natural juſtice. A *tenth* part of the Houſe of Commons is choſen effectively by much leſs than *four hundred* people; and in ſome places the repreſentatives equal in number, or exceed, the electors. *All proportion of repreſentation is confounded, inverted, loſt.* Go now, ye who add inſult to intolerable wrong, go and tell the injured, the awakened Majeſty of this great People, the want of honeſty in

* Vid. Sharp's Declaration of the Right of the People, and Burgh's Political Diſquiſitions.

in the nation is the cauſe of undue influence in parliament: when, if nine hundred in every thouſand were purity itſelf, incorruptible purity, there would be abundantly more in the frail tythe of the nation than the number by which is choſen the efficient majority in that which is called at preſent the Houſe of Commons. Tell them to be the honeſt, the enlightened, the patriotic guardians of this great country, which has ſuffered its rights of repreſentation to ſink into their hands. Let them riſe from indigence, ſervility, and corruption; from ignorance, from vitiated habits, from confirmed venality; let this handful of wretched men riſe at the virtue-making voice of ſuch advocates for national honeſty; ſuch reprovers of that corruption which they cheriſh. I truſt they *ſhall* riſe to public virtue, order, and freedom: but it muſt be by taking away the temptations, the moral neceſſity of evil; by blending them with the purifying maſs of

the

the people at large; by allowing their ſuffrage in Counties or in great Towns which have at preſent none or a defective repreſentation. Thus ſhall they have their vote free inſtead of corrupt; honourable, not infamous; beneficial to their country, and in the beſt ſenſe beneficial to themſelves; inſtead of being the public inſufferable nuiſance of their country, and deſtructive of their own morals and honour. I doubt not that even in theſe dependent boroughs there are honeſt public-ſpirited men. Though the nature of the thing muſt have a daily progreſſive tendency to diminiſh their proportion. Theſe will co-operate,—and, for the reſt, when the conteſt is between the proſtitute unjuſt claims of a venal few, and the neceſſary, innoxious, and ſalutary rights of above four hundred thouſand, which is nearly twice as many as it is probable vote at preſent — FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND at the loweſt eſtimation

eſtimation that ſeems any way reconcileable with the ſecurity of the people; and about a *million and an half*, if competency to elect is regulated by the natural right of adult diſcretion, not by the arbitrary diſtinctions of property*. When ſuch are the competitors, ſuch the competition, is it not ridiculous to aſk which ought to prevail, or which muſt prevail? juſt ſtrength or corrupt weakneſs; a part or the whole; rectitude or iniquity; freedom or oppreſſion; happineſs or miſery; the welfare or the deſtruction of the people?

As to the other great point, that of ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, is it not *neceſſary*, in order to preſerve and give effect to the equality of elections? Does not experience and reaſon teach us, that a power ſo extenſive, ſo liable to abuſe, delegated for *ſeven* years, forgets its

* Vide Burgh's Political Diſquiſitions, and Cartwright's Legiſlative Rights.

ſource; and not returning to the great ocean of the people, ſtagnates, is corrupted, is peſtilential? And whence this ſeptennial delegation? Not by authority of the people, I re-aſſert, and the people knows and feels it, but by violence committed on the ſacred liberty of the conſtitution, by its guardians, by the ſervants of the people. There are many now alive who can remember that fatal uſurpation: ſome of them were even then of diſcretion. That uſurpation has but lately paſſed the time which amounts to a preſcription againſt a writ of right on the claim of an individual to the freehold of a few paltry acres. What confidence muſt it not require to offer it in the face of the nation as a bar to their liberties? ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS are the RIGHT, the CONSTITUTIONAL USAGE of the PEOPLE. We have evidence of *yearly* writs for the election of a new parliament in every

year

year of Edward the Third, from the 34th to the end of that reign; that is to ſay, for ſixteen years, three only excepted, for which writs are not found; but the preſumption is fair, that they did exiſt. The ſame glorious reign had ſuch regard to repreſentation, that it appointed repreſentatives for Calais, when Calais was become a part of the dominions of the Britiſh crown. We have reiterated objections of the multiplicity of buſineſs, increaſed population, and ſtability of treaties, and ſtate myſteries to prevent ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS. The buſineſs of ancient ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS was to make a *few wiſe* laws, expreſſed with a ſimple dignity and a clear conciſeneſs: not a multitude of diſcordant unconſtitutional laws, loaded with redundancy of words and perplexity of matter. They had not *conteſted elections* to ſettle. They were no court of inquiſition on the lives and

liberties of their conſtituents. They granted or withheld the ſupplies on extraordinary occaſions, as inſtructed by thoſe conſtituents, and authorized by the ſenſe of the people. By maintaining national freedom and integrity; by a jealous and wiſe œconomy; by liberal contributions for public, not private, purpoſes, they cheriſhed that ſpirit and thoſe reſources which conduct wars with vigour, and terminate them with glory. *Treaties* they left to the *executive* power. If baſe or treacherous, by the fault of miniſtry, *impeachment*, ſevere enquiry, and exemplary puniſhment, was the reſult. There was nothing done under the ſhelter of parliament to legalize miſconduct, and give the ſanction of impunity to delinquents againſt the nation. We ſhall have ſufficient time for the true and proper buſineſs of the Houſe of Commons whenever it is reſtored to its dignity and independence. The increaſe of

population

population ſince the time of Edward the Third, if it be real, calls for enlarging, and not reducing, the number of the elective body. If, as from various cauſes, there was reaſon to apprehend, and, as a late eſſay on the ſtate of population, I fear, proves, with too irreſiſtible conviction, we are decreaſed to an alarming degree ever ſince the revolution, were decreaſing before that period, and have been rapidly diminiſhing within theſe few years, then freedom, ſecurity of property, confidence in the government, improvement of public morals, the natural reſult each of the other, and all of *equal* and *annual parliaments*, may be expected to ſet bounds to this decline, reſtore and multiply population. From the time mentioned in the reign of Edward the Third till the reign of Henry the Eighth, for about two hundred years, they were generally *annual*, and never more than *triennial*; till that tyrant,

breaking all bounds of right, human and divine, found the convenience of long parliaments; and with ſuch parliaments he made laws, at the abſurdity of which common ſenſe is aſtoniſhed, and at the cruelty of which humanity revolts. A noble part, a characteriſtic, an eſſential of our free Saxon conſtitution, are ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS. They have been given by the enlightened firmneſs of this great metropolis in ſolemn *inſtruction* to her reſpectable repreſentatives: they have been urged with patriotic wiſdom and eloquence both within the Houſe and out of it. They are, it is true, intirely oppoſite to factious and corrupt intereſts: but every honeſt and public principle recommends, ſupports, demands them. ANNUAL ASSEMBLIES have been the uſage of a country where population has moſt rapidly increaſed, where commerce, agriculture, and all the great bleſſings of ſociety

ſociety have flouriſhed. It was by deſtroying conſtitutional freedom that war and deſolation were introduced *, and that glorious ſyſtem of great and populous ſtates ſeparated from their natural centre. The incorrupt ſyſtem of the common conſtitution was the grand point round which they revolved freely, but regularly; and might for ages have continued to revolve, receiving and imparting light and happineſs, had not arbitrary law uſurped the place of reciprocal attraction, and driven them from their orbit. Experience and reaſon ſhews, that tumult would be leſſened, together with the cauſes of undue influence. The people might aſſemble by pariſhes, or other certain diviſions: there would not be the rage of novelty, after an interval, as now, of ſeven years, to put their minds in a ferment; and when as many, nearly

* Vid. Sharp's Annual Parliaments and Equal Repreſentations; and Cartwright's Legiſlative Rights.

at leaſt, would be to be bribed, even on Mr. Burgh's plan of repreſentation, in order to gain a majority in the Houſe, as now there are of electors in the whole iſland; when petty boroughs were thrown into the county, as Shoreham has been already, without tumult, by act of parliament; or added to the towns, ſo that no place might have a ſeparate repreſentative which had not a number of electors in proportion to the whole, equal to the proportion of a ſingle repreſentative to the whole Houſe; when this is done, public corruption is not retrenched, but *eradicated, annihilated*, by being made uſeleſs and *impracticable*. No individual by ſuch means would loſe any thing that he ought to hold or could rationally wiſh: and the great branches of the legiſlation would acquire ſtrength, beauty, perpetuity. The Houſe of Commons would then be in truth what its name imports, the *auguſt independent repreſentative*

tative of this glorious nation. The Houſe of Peers would ſhine forth in its *proper* dignity, which the unconſtitutional dependence of any part of the legiſlature muſt neceſſarily obſtruct or pervert; and the *crown* would preſide with tranquil ſecurity and glory, the firſt member of a free legiſlation, the head of an united, happy, and then invincible people. Then might we expect to renew our interrupted connexion with America, on free, permanent, truly beneficial terms, as with brethren and equal friends by a FEDERAL UNION.

With the great objects of national honour and integrity in view, the COUNTY-MEETINGS *have been convened.* Much has been done already towards collecting the ſenſe of the people upon the concerns of the people. Be the reformation great or ſmall, real or imaginary, if it is the ſenſe of the people that it ought to take place, they have a right to it: if the public

public voice is againſt it, we have neither right nor power to ſubſtitute our ſentiments for thoſe of the people, or to make them free in ſpite of theirſelves. There is no cauſe therefore to be diſconcerted about the proteſts! The national judgment on the objects of the petition and of the proteſts prevail! This we have to obſerve with ſatisfaction, that England has at laſt *national*, not party, *meetings*; in which there has been an union of wiſe and moderate men of *every political denomination and connection*: becauſe the objects propoſed, of national œconomy, and reſtraining undue influence, required no other party but that of *principle* and *unbiaſſed underſtanding*. To have the ſenſe of the people fairly and effectually, *aſſociation* and *correſpondence* is *neceſſary*: we ought not, when on every account, ſolid, ſubſtantial union is of ſuch importance, to be like a rope of ſand. The propoſitions are public and open, juſt and neceſſary

neceſſary in their own nature; conſtitutional and peaceable in the purſuit; and conducted, notwithſtanding the diſtreſſes of the times, and the temper and conduct of ſome who have oppoſed them, with exemplary order and regularity. We ſhould have too much cauſe to ſuſpect that they were not objects of great and permanent importance to the public happineſs, if they were to have found an entire and eaſy acquieſcence; for they affect partial and undue intereſts; and therefore very ſhort of effectual reformation muſt have been the meaſures of which all could have been contented to ſpeak well. Wherever there is a reformation of rooted evils, ſome muſt loſe by it. The complaint is, as it ought to be, general as to perſons, though *ſpecific* as to *things*. It expects the retrenchment of unmerited penſions and unneceſſary places, to whatever party, to whatever men belonging: it demands reſtriction to be provided againſt undue influence, whether this or any

any future miniſtry ſhould be tempted to avail themſelves of it. Whatever tenderneſs can be ſhewn to individuals, conſiſtent with the juſtice and ſecurity which the nation owes to herſelf, may be expected from the ſenſe, the humanity of Engliſhmen; and from the nature of the meetings, of which the common intereſts, not party; ſafety, not revenge, appear the decided view. To ſuch aſſociations this and every other country in Europe owes whatever liberty it poſſeſſes, or has poſſeſſed. War and civil confuſion, or confirmed ſlavery, have ariſen from the want of them. Shall we ſmile or be indignant when we are told, that the enemies of England will rejoice at theſe aſſociations? not her internal enemies, we are well aſſured. As to foreign enemies, if they can rejoice that meaſures are proceeding quietly and regularly, which, without diminiſhing the national reſources, nay, which encreaſ-

ing

ing them, will introduce, when adopted, a wiſe œconomy; if they can rejoice that the ſenſe of this great people is likely to be better repreſented; that our vaſt collective ſtrength will no longer be broken to ſerve the little cabals of any ſet of men, but will act concentered in one focus; if they can imagine an advantage in our having a miniſtry in whom, under theſe reſtrictions, (to which the beſt and wiſeſt ought ever to be ſubject) the confidence of the nation may be wiſely and ſucceſsfully repoſed; either they are not the enemies of the people, or I ſhould then rejoice at their unexpected folly. But if penſions, ſinecure places, parliaments of enormous duration, and in which the people is not repreſented; if every art of undue influence, every means that can ſhackle, debilitate, or pervert the ſpirit of this people are to continue, and ſink the hardy, unconquerable union of national independence, France, Spain,

all

all the enemies of England and of the liberties of man will have reaſon to rejoice, if any enmity between nations can riſe to ſuch an height. For, on ſuch a ſuppoſition, our enemies, if ſubdued, which could not then be expected, would be ſubdued in vain: the conqueſt would only rivet the chains of the conquering people, and add weight to their yoke.

A diſſolution of parliament in courſe approaches. It is thought probable miniſtry may precipitate that event. After what has happened, they cannot, one would preſume, expect ſuch a majority as in the preſent. But whether it is to be diſſolved before its time; or, if that is to be imagined, to continue beyond it; whatever is to be done, whatever offered, nothing ought to find us at this time unprovided of conſtitutional diſcretion; more eſpecially as the *Counties* know *ſeverally* what *boroughs* have a ſhare in the *repreſentation* of the county palpably

palpably *injurious*, and notoriouſly *corrupt*; as they know, or may eaſily, what *Towns* have *no repreſentatives*, that by their populouſneſs ought to have; and as by *correſpondence* they may be informed of the ſtate of the *elective* and *repreſentative* body in the other counties, they will have an opportunity—which, it is ſubmitted to their collective wiſdom, ſhould be taken without delaying the neceſſary ſteps a *moment*—of adjuſting together by their committees the grand and neceſſary outline of A SCHEME OF PARTICULAR AND GENERAL REPRESENTATION. This needs not interfere with the ſpecific propoſals of the petitions relative to places and penſions. It will naturally, if agreed, be the object of a diſtinct petition, in which the counties will act as they ſhall judge of its utility and neceſſity. A ſpecious reform, and a ſeptennial parliament of a plauſible appearance might, I fear, ſettle the yoke upon this country for ages.

And

And when the *County-meetings* ſhould once diſſolve without attaining the only adequate object, then, indeed, *anarchy*, *inſurrection*, and *ſervitude*, after all, might be to be dreaded: but let us not with ſuch omens pollute a ſeaſon of better auſpices. *Triennial* parliaments have been found an *ineffectual* barrier to corruption: *ſeptennial* have been——But here ſilence and the public feelings are the only eloquence. ANNUAL, with an EQUAL REPRESENTATION, may, I truſt, be eſtabliſhed now, peaceably and permanently; for, if they are the wiſh of the majority of the people, it would be a mad rebellion indeed to refuſe them, and an ill compliment to the preſent miniſtry to be made them by their friends, if they ſuppoſe that ſuch a requiſition of the people could meet with a denial.

My countrymen have to chuſe between the conduct which will reſtore the

the conſtitution, our ancient conſtitution to its juſt purity, by the means which have been already ſuggeſted, and that which miniſters have purſued hitherto, and will purſue if left to themſelves; between a glory and happineſs, higher than any other country, than even this itſelf ever enjoyed, and inſtant ſervitude, infamy, and deſtruction. I truſt they will chuſe like Engliſhmen. For this truſt, beſides our old national character of good ſenſe, of firm and benevolent temper, and a perſevering love of freedom, we have valuable pledges in thoſe recent public tranſactions, which amidſt horror and darkneſs, amidſt unaccuſtomed infamy and calamities unexampled, will ſpread a ray on the hiſtory of our times, and teſtify that our ſpirit and virtue were not wholly extinguiſhed. May the parent of light, of genuine glory and happineſs, ſupport and increaſe in us *intelligence*, *moderation*, *fortitude*, and *concord!*

Our conſtitution once renovated and eſtabliſhed, may be fixed, and would probably, to the end of time, without ever relapſing more into ſuch a total decline as it has lately ſuffered, to which it has been long inſenſibly deſcending, and within theſe few years *precipitated.* With every enlightening advantage from our times and ſituation, we may be more free and happy, virtuous, informed, beneficent to ourſelves, to poſterity, to the human race, than the utmoſt ſtretch of our ideas at preſent will permit us to imagine. But as *knowledge* and *power* exiſting in a *limited* degree, and in a ſtate liable to perverſion, are the inſtruments of *good* or *ill*, according as they are *applied*; *we are ſurrounded with every thing that may fix and embitter ſervitude, if we ſuffer corruption to prevail.* However, let us keep in our eyes the bright, the animating view of reviving freedom and virtue; and remember

we

we are not ſtriving for a ſelfiſh party, for revenge, for dominion founded upon force; but for that in which every party is intereſted, THE GOOD OF ALL, FOUNDED IN THE CONSENT OF ALL; for a party common to all the good and reflecting; the party of *integrity*, of *freedom*, of the *conſtitution*. This is a conſideration of ſuch infinite importance, that my heart has repeatedly returned to it: and ſurely it will not be thought to have been too often, too earneſtly recommended. I reſt in full aſſurance, that the national deciſion will confirm, by a ſeaſonable and general concurrence in the principles of evident right, and the practice of conſtitutional virtue, that there is a public party, a party not miniſterial, not of oppoſition, but of the PEOPLE, eſſential to the welfare of the community, and *immediately* neceſſary to be taken, and conſequently

ſequently that to *be neutral really, or in appearance, in the preſent alarming and divided ſtate of the nation, would be criminal indeed* *.

CAPEL LOFFT.

FINIS.

Page 19, for SIX read FIVE years. The battle of Lexington was on the 19th of April, 1775.

* The *ſubſtance* of what is delivered here was ſpoken in an *incorrupt aſſembly* of *Engliſhmen*, whoſe deciſions I cordially reſpect, as thinking them generally conformable to the CONSTITUTION, LIBERTY, and VIRTUE.